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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

Ethics

8 June 1978

The Editor
FOREIGN AFFAIRS
58 East 68th Street
New York, New York 10021

Dear Sir:

I enjoyed very much reading E. Drexel Godfrey's article in the April issue on "Ethics and Intelligence." In the first half of his article, Professor Godfrey very clearly outlines the ethical dilemmas which confront intelligence officers who go into the field to collect information and intelligence analysts who process that information into estimates and evaluations. He poignantly brings out how the actions of individuals in handling their ethical dilemmas and the pressures of the bureaucratic structure have led to problems and abuses (and presumably to achievements).

In the second half of his article, Professor Godfrey gives his prescription for grappling with these ethical issues in the future. In essence, he advocates abandoning all political action (the effort to influence events in foreign countries) and all clandestine collection of intelligence information abroad. Instead, he believes, we must rely exclusively on technical means of collecting intelligence and open sources of information. He incorrectly attributes to me a recognition that technical means of collecting intelligence are supplanting the clandestine human means. I do not accept that thesis. Human intelligence collection has been with the world for centuries. It still has unique contributions to make which technical systems seldom can equal, especially in uncovering intentions, aspirations and plans of others. More importantly, Professor Godfrey's proposed solution is not, in my opinion, a solution after all. Rather than grapple with the ethical issues of intelligence, he would simply attempt to bypass them. I say "attempt" because I doubt that even his proscription on political action and clandestine collection would accomplish that.

Instead, I believe that we should think more deeply about the ethical issues of how far one will go in either efforts to influence events in other countries or to collect information about them clandestinely. Our nation's intelligence community is evolving in that direction. There are new laws from the Congress, rules from the President, and regulations from

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the Director of Central Intelligence governing various facets of this, e.g., there will be no planning or conduct of assassinations. What we are attempting to do is to draw a fine line between such explicit proscriptions that the intelligence community is bound hand and foot and cannot do its task and such lack of guidance that the full weight of the ethical dilemma rests upon the individual intelligence officer and analyst. We are now engaged in establishing a new and American concept of intelligence. There is no reason that we cannot achieve this. The ethical dilemmas of intelligence are no different in gender or quantity from those which many other professions face; e.g., the military man must decide whether it is right to kill in a given circumstance; the executive in a multinational corporation must decide whether a favor can be justified; and a negotiator of diplomacy must decide whether to practice deception as a tactic. I would welcome the assistance of future authors in your journal in helping us to grapple with the ethical issues of intelligence in explicit terms.

Yours sincerely,

STANSFIELD TURNER

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